



# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **CALTRANS MEDAL OF VALOR NOMINEES TO RECEIVE GOVERNOR'S SAFETY AWARD**

**SACRAMENTO/SAN BERNARDINO** - Four highway maintenance workers from Caltrans District 8 will receive the Governor's Employee Safety Award at a ceremony in Sacramento on Friday, August 26, 2005. These employees are also nominees for the Governor's Medal of Valor for saving a motorist's life. Jonathan Bevan, Henry Harden, Keith Laub and Steve Carroll rescued a woman whose vehicle skidded and overturned on an icy patch along Highway 38 near Onyx Summit in the San Bernardino Mountains.

### **STORY FOLLOWS:**

It was January 20, 2004 when an overturned SUV, with wheels spinning, had its driver trapped inside. The SUV kept slipping slowly down the slope. Henry Harden, Caltrans equipment operator, had been repairing guide markers along the highway when another motorist, retired police detective Gerald Loeb summoned him. The steep mountain slope kept Mr. Loeb from reaching the driver and in the mountains, he couldn't get a cell phone signal to call for help. Henry radioed his supervisor and the Caltrans Traffic Management Center for help. Soon after, Keith Laub, Caltrans equipment operator arrived. He and Henry Harden knew what they had to do to save the motorist. They had to secure her SUV until emergency crews could arrive. So Keith Laub took a chain from the snowplow, climbed down the slippery slope, attached the chain to the axle of the SUV and climbed back up to the highway. Henry Harden secured the other end of the chain to the Caltrans snowplow. Soon, Jon Bevan, maintenance supervisor and Steve Carroll, equipment operator arrived at the scene. They had another chain. This time, Henry Harden climbed down the slope and attached it to the overturned vehicle. Jon Bevan attached the other end to a Caltrans pick-up truck. Then, one at a time, Laub and Bevan moved the Caltrans vehicles to draw the chains into a taut "V". It was a delicate balancing act - first climbing down the slippery slope and back up again, placing the chains on the vehicle's axle, then pulling the chains tight enough to hold the SUV. If the tension on the chains had been too much, it could have dislodged the vehicle from its precarious position and caused it to plunge to the bottom of the canyon. The team stabilized the vehicle.

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It was a skillful maneuver. The occupant was visibly relieved. Meanwhile Jonathan Bevan and Steve Carroll provided the safety zone for Mr. Harden and Mr. Laub to work. Jon Bevan and Steve Carroll set up traffic controls by marking off the area and moving spectators to a safe area. This helped ensure everyone's safety and cleared the way for emergency vehicles to gain access. The situation was very dangerous. Another vehicle lost control on the icy road and crashed within 15 feet of the Caltrans snowplow. As snow continued to fall, Steve Carroll applied cinders to the roadway to improve roadway traction to help motorists get up the hill. For an hour after, the Caltrans team directed traffic and kept an eye on the vehicle and its occupant until rescue teams arrived. Then, using the one available traffic lane, emergency paramedics, a sheriff's unit, two highway patrol cars, a fire truck and a tow truck reached the location. Fire Department personnel pried the door open and carried the driver to safety. She was taken to a nearby hospital for evaluation and released the same day.

Henry Harden, Keith Laub, Steve Carroll and Jon Bevan saved the motorist from plunging to her death. It's their bravery, dedication and willingness to risk their own safety to aid another that deserve recognition. "I am immensely impressed with the professionalism of these Caltrans employees. Saving a person from death is the noblest act, said Gerald Loeb, the good citizen who stopped to help.

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